

San José State University
Anthropology Department
Anth 131, Theories of Culture, Fall 2020

Contact Information

Instructor:	John Marlovits
Office Location:	Clark 463
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Email:	John.marlovits@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	By appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-1:15
Classroom:	Online: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/93365289086?pwd=K0szcUV2TlZ3Nct3WlphdTJ6U3lhZz09
Prerequisites:	Upper division standing; Anthropology 11 or Instructor's consent

Course Description

This course provides a general introduction to theories of culture that animate contemporary anthropology. The course emphasizes the changing meanings of culture, society, and biology in the context of colonialism, the Cold War, corporate globalization, and other contemporary phenomena. We will also examine the diffusion of the culture concept—from American anthropology, across academic disciplines, and out into the general public. By the end of the course you should have an understanding of the development of cultural anthropological thought, the most influential theoretical approaches of the 20th and 21st century, and the political and economic circumstances under which anthropological ideas emerge.

The course is non-linear in organization, moving between present and past, past and present, and between multiple contemporary points from around the globe – thus eschewing presumptions of unilinear temporality and progression that often organize the history of anthropological theory. The course does not assume an agreed-upon canon of cultural theory, nor does it presume that theory is the fulfillment of a narrative of progress. Instead it presumes that there are many simultaneous, sometimes contradictory, and often mutually-oblivious conversations in circulation. It presumes that ideas become embedded in common sense disciplinary practices that might outlive their theoretical cache – and even consciousness of their presence. It presumes that there is no one history of cultural theory, and that the clean lines of theoretical differentiation are more fictions of literature reviews than the ordinary and messy bricolage of concepts that anthropologists draw upon as tools for illuminating their concerns. Instead the course offers students entry into the echoes, layering, and polyphony spurred by theoretical concepts as they are reframed and embedded in the unique fieldwork and writing practices that animate anthropology.

Course readings will echo and reverberate between key theorists, theorizations of contemporary problems, and the always slightly obtuse and local ways that these concepts alter, appear in, and generate ethnographic texts. Thus, the object of the course is an attunement to this layering: scuttling back and forth between the messy and productive space connecting big ideas and ethnographic description and analysis. It asks how ethnographic writing and practice might generate a kind of “low theory” in dialogue with, but distinct from

“high theory.” Students are invited to make use, find their own path, and weave their own text out of this polyphony.

Course Format

Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses

This course adopts a hybrid online course strategy. It requires that students have access to Zoom, Canvas, and various web-based media platforms. Students will also need to download lockdown browser technology for exams.. See [University Policy F13-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-2.pdf> for more details.

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [MySJSU on Spartan App Portal](http://one.sjsu.edu) <http://one.sjsu.edu> (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources) (http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources)

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate different theories of culture and society developed by British, French, US, and other anthropologists from the late 19th century to the present
2. Explain how historical, political and economic contexts shaped and impacted these theories
3. Trace relationships between anthropological theories and methods and relationships between anthropological theories and practices
4. Compare and contrast classic ethnographies from the past and the present
5. Analyze and discuss the relationship of anthropological knowledge and the general public
6. Conduct library research and prepare an academic term paper.

Required Texts

Jason Pine, *The Alchemy of Meth: A Decomposition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Students *may* be required to purchase an additional ethnography of their own choosing in preparation for their final paper.

Students should get a student subscription to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or both

Other Readings

Additional readings will be distributed by the instructor or will be available through the MLK Jr. Library.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will

spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Pop Quizzes (5 over the semester: 10%)

Students will be required to perform group facilitations of course material twice over the course of the semester. This will entail leading a class discussion about weekly course readings, and performing close readings that underscore and elucidate key concepts in course material.

Bi-Weekly Research Cluster Exegesis Papers (5 over semester: 25%)

Each student must join a research cluster of roughly 5 other students. Each research cluster will be responsible for writing and posting a short 1-2 page (single-spaced) exegesis paper to student bulletin boards.

Thursday Seminar Facilitation (5 over semester) + Participation (20%)

Research clusters will be responsible for preparing at least three questions to facilitate discussion in Thursday lectures. Questions may ask the professor for clarification — or may ask for reflecting and discussion from fellow students

Students will also be required to provide a participation grade for themselves and for each member of their research cluster. (This self-reported and research cluster-reported grade will account for half of the 20%)

Exegesis Commentary (10%)

Students are required to comment once per week on the exegesis papers posted by other research clusters. Responses should be brief, and should engage with ideas put forth in an exegesis paper.

Critical Research Paper (35%)

Students are required to write a 7-8 page, double-spaced, term paper that addresses some question of theory in anthropology.

Students may approach this topic in multiple ways. But should be sure to consult with the Instructor (beginning in week 8) about the appropriateness of their topic and in regard to choosing the ethnographic text(s) they plan to focus on.

Students may choose to write a paper 1) comparing the theoretical approaches to a particular question that anthropologists took in different eras. For instance, how did anthropologists write about indigenous groups before 1970 in contrast to how they describe indigeneity today? 2) Students may also choose to explore the role of theory in the analysis of a particular issue, or may pursue a theoretical school or question. 3) Finally, students can also choose to write about ethnography and ethnographic texts as a particular mode of theorizing that raises questions about representation, storytelling, (literary) description with its own unique set of forms, possibilities, and types of knowledge.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass. I will not accept late assignments nor will I administer makeup exams unless documents can be presented as evidence of illness, death in family, jury duty, etc. No assignments will be accepted via e-mail—I must receive hard copies of all assignments.

NOTE that [University policy F69-24](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf> states that “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

Grading Information

Grading Distribution is as follows:

100-97 = A plus

96-93 = A

92-90 = A minus

89-87 = B plus

86-83 = B

83-80 = B

79-77 = C plus

76-73 = C

72-70 = C minus

69-67 = D plus

66-63 = D

Below 63 = F

Determination of Grades

Grades will be determined on the basis of points. See descriptions above for point breakdown of individual assignments.

There will be no extra credit.

LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO. A DOCTOR'S NOTE WILL BE REQUIRED FOR LATE PAPERS TO BE CONSIDERED, AND STUDENTS REQUESTING EXTENSIONS WILL NEED TO CONTACT THE PROFESSOR IN ADVANCE OF THE DEADLINE AND PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE EXTENSION.

PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC “F” GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Final Examination

The Final examination will test students grasp of course concepts through essay and short answer questions.

[University policy S17-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf>) which states that “Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment.”

Classroom Protocol

Students are required to attend and participate in online lectures and work collaboratively with other students in an assigned research cluster.

Email Etiquette

Please write “Anth 131” followed by the subject of your email in the Subject line of your email. I will respond to your email as quickly as possible, however students should expect to wait at 24-hours for a response – and should not expect text messaging-like access via email. Students should also begin emails with appropriate formality, e.g., “Dear/Hi Professor Marlovits,” and should conclude with a salutation and their name (at least for the first in a string of emails). I will not answer questions over email that can be answered by reading the syllabus. I will not answer questions over email about missed lectures – students are required to come to lecture, and if they can’t make it, ask a classmate to share notes. Substantial questions cannot be answered over email and students should come to my office hours instead. I cannot answer email queries about papers, such as: “I don’t know what to write about for the paper, can you help me?” The answer is that I can help you, but you must come to office hours, and you also must do more than say “I don’t know” and begin to formulate at least a vague attempt at a topic. I do not accept electronic papers, and will not edit or grade rough drafts via email. If you would like me to look at a rough draft, you must come to office hours or set up an appointment with me.

University Policies (Required)

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Readings and assignment dates may change with fair warning.

Anthropology 131 / Theories of Culture, Fall 2020, Course Schedule

Anthropology 131 / Theories of Culture, Fall 2020, Course Schedule		
		Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/20	Course Introduction
2	8/25 8/27	Surprise! (Epistemological - Ontological - Anarchism) Hugh Raffles, “Chernobyl” and pp. 63-68 in <i>Insectopedia</i> Anand Pandian, “For the Humanity Yet to Come” Politics, Art, Fiction, Ethnography” Michel Foucault, pp. 78-85 in “Two Lectures” in <i>Power/Knowledge</i> (on subjugated knowledge and genealogy — non-totalizing “theory”)
3	9/1 9/3	Structure and Function, Process and Meaning, Parts and Wholes: On Essentialism and the Culture Concept T. Hyllert Erikson and FS Nielsen, “Four Founding Fathers” and “Expansion and Institutionalization” in <i>A History of Anthropology</i> Caroline Levine, “Raymond Williams, <i>Marxism and Literature</i> ” in <i>Public Culture</i> Recommended: Esther Newton, excerpts in <i>Mother Camp</i> Recommended: James Clifford, first half of “On Ethnographic Authority”
4	9/8 9/10	Deconstructing Culture: “Postmodernism” and the Crisis of Representation

		<p>T: Dismantling Essentialist Visions of Culture, Confronting Post-war Geopolitics Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties" George Marcus, "Theory in Anthropology since the Eighties" and "Legacies of <i>Writing Culture</i>"</p> <p>Th: Ethnographic Authority; or Who Speaks for Who? Power, Representation, and Subjectivity Edward Said, excerpts in <i>Orientalism</i> James Clifford, Interview 1 in <i>On the Edges of Anthropology</i> Roberto Gonzalez, "Counterinsurgency in the Colonies" in <i>Militarizing Culture</i></p> <p>Recommended: James Clifford, first half of "On Ethnographic Authority"</p>
5	9/15 9/17	<p>Reinventing Objects, Methods, and Audiences Example: Look over the Asthma Files, especially "Design Logics" and "About PECE" here: https://theasthmafiles.org/about Reflect on Raffles and Pandian from week 2</p> <p>Reading: George Marcus, "Ethnography In/Of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography" (read for multi-sited fieldwork strategies) Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference"</p> <p>Recommended: Kim Fortun, "Ethnography in Late Industrialism" <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 27(3) Vanessa Agard-Jones, "Bodies in the System" <i>Small Axe</i> 17(3), Nov 2013 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, excerpts from "Anthropology and the Savage Slot" and "Making Sense: Fields in which we work." In <i>Global Transformations</i></p>
6	9/22 9/24	<p>Power/Knowledge and the Decentered Subject: Creating Selfhood Power/knowledge and Normalization Michel Foucault, "The Perverse Implantation," "Scientia Sexualis" (pp. 36-74) and "Method" (pp. 92-102) in <i>History of Sexuality, Vol 1</i> Ian Hacking, "Making Up People" Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "A Critical-Interpretive Approach in Medical Anthropology: Rituals and Routines of Discipline and Dissent"</p> <p>Recommended: Michel Foucault, excerpts in "The Body of the Condemned" in <i>Discipline and Punish</i> Jasbir Puar, "Regimes of Surveillance" available here: https://cosmologicsmagazine.com/jasbir-puar-regimes-of-surveillance/</p> <p>Normalization and the Politics of Desire Edward Thornton, article on Deleuze and Guattari available here:</p>

		<p>https://aeon.co/essays/a-creative-multiplicity-the-philosophy-of-deleuze-and-guattari</p> <p>Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Social Repression and Psychic Repression," in <i>Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i></p> <p>Dagmar Herzog, "Exploding Oedipus" in <i>Cold War Freud</i></p>
7	9/29 10/1	<p>Narrative, the Dialogic Imagination, and Subjectivity</p> <p>T: Narullah Mambrol, "Key Theories of Mikhail Bakhtin," available here: https://literariness.org/2018/01/24/key-theories-of-mikhail-bakhtin/</p> <p>Susan Harding, "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: the Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion" <i>American Ethnologist</i></p> <p>Read James Clifford on polyphonic texts in "On Ethnographic Authority" pp. 133-142</p> <p>Th:</p> <p>Alison Piepmeier, excerpts in <i>Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism</i> pp. 1-7 & pp. 130-154</p> <p>Shane Greene, "El Problema de la Sub-Tierra" pp. 45-51</p> <p>View first half of <i>The Punk Singer</i></p> <p>Recommended: V.N. Volosinov, "The Study of Ideologies and Philosophy of Language" in <i>Marxism and the Philosophy of Language</i></p> <p>Dick Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony" (pp. 5-22) and "Some Case Studies" (pp. 27-45) in <i>Subculture: The Meaning of Style</i></p> <p>Gloria Anzaldua, excerpts in <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i></p> <p>Carole McGranahan, "On Writing and Writing Well: Ethics, Practice, Story" in <i>Writing Anthropology</i></p>
8	10/6 10/8	<p>Research Cluster conferences and Instructor Advising</p> <p>Students should work in research cluster or in meetings with Instructor to establish a term paper topic</p>
9	10/13 10/15	<p>Multispecies Ethnography, Nature/Cultures, Historical Ontology, Anthropocene/Capitolocene/Planationocene</p> <p>T: Donna Haraway, excerpts in <i>Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, Humans, and Significant Otherness</i></p> <p>Anna Tsing, "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species"</p> <p>View short intro clips on concept of the rhizome</p> <p>Th: Julie Livingston, "in the Time of Beef" in <i>Self-Devouring Growth</i></p> <p>Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" in <i>Capital Vol. 1</i></p> <p>E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Interest in Cattle" in <i>The Nuer</i></p> <p>Excerpts from Haraway, <i>Staying with the Trouble</i> on capitolocene vs anthropocene, as well as riff on Tsing in Unruly Edges and the end of ecologies of safety.</p> <p>Recommended: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Rhizome" in A</p>

		<p><i>Thousand Plateaus</i></p> <p>Gaston Gordillo “Metropolis: Infrastructure of the Anthropocene”</p> <p>Annemarie Mol, “A readers guide to the ontological turn” <i>Somatosphere</i></p>
10	10/20 10/22	<p>Memory, Haunting, Ruins, Debility, Repression</p> <p>T: Avery Gordon, excerpts in <i>Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination</i> (pp. 72-102)</p> <p>Shane Greene, “On the Risks of Underground Rock Production” in <i>Punk and Revolution</i></p> <p>Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”</p> <p>Th: Ann Stoler, “Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination”</p> <p>Jasbir Puar, excerpts in <i>The Right to Maim</i></p>
11	10/27 10/29	<p>Dispossession, Capitalism, Colonialism</p> <p>T: Eric Wolf, excerpts in <i>Europe and a People without History</i></p> <p>David Harvey, short clips on primitive accumulation</p> <p><i>Capitalism, a Six-Part Series Episode 1</i></p> <p>Th: Halberstam excerpt in <i>In a Queer Time and Place</i></p> <p>Ta-Nehisi Coates “Black Boy Interrupted” talk</p> <p>Adom Getachew, “Colonialism Made the Modern World. Let’s Remake It,” <i>New York Times</i> July 27, 2020: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/27/opinion/sunday/decolonization-statues.html</p> <p>Revisit Anna Tsing “Unruly Edges”</p> <p>Recommended: Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, excerpts in <i>On Decoloniality</i></p> <p>Mark Rifkin excerpts in <i>Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation</i></p>
12	11/3 11/5	<p>Affect, Attachment, Crisis Ordinary</p> <p>Kathleen Stewart, “The World that Affect Made”</p> <p>Joe Masco, “Survival is Your Business”</p> <p>Shaylih Muehlmann, “The Narco Uncanny”</p> <p>Recommended: Lauren Berlant excerpts in “The Intuitionists”</p>
13	11/10 11/12	<p>Refusal and Fugitivity; or Another World is Possible</p> <p>Carole McGranahan, “Theorizing Refusal” in <i>CA</i></p> <p>Damien Sojoyner, “Another Life Is Possible: Black Fugitivity and Enclosed Places” in <i>CA</i></p> <p>Jack Halberstam and Tavia Nyong’o, “Theory in the Wild” in <i>South Atlantic Quarterly</i></p> <p>Matt Wolf-Meyer, “Don’t Fight the Future” in <i>Somatosphere</i></p> <p>Shane Greene, “On the Risks of Underground Rock Production” in <i>Punk and Revolution</i></p>
14	11/17	<p>Form, Content, and Genre in Ethnographic Writing: What is Ethnographic</p>

	11/19	Knowledge? Jason Pine, <i>The Alchemy of Meth: A Decomposition</i> , entire book Recommended: Stuart McLean and Anand Pandian, "Prologue" and Kathleen Stewart, "Epilogue" in <i>Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing</i> Sasha Su-Ling Welland, "List as Form" Literary, Ethnographic, Long, Short, Heavy, Light" in <i>Writing Anthropology</i>
15	11/24 11/26 no class for Thanksgiving	Research Cluster conferences: Ethnographic Reflection
16	12/1 12/3	Research Cluster conferences and Instructor Advising
Final Exam	12/10 9:45-12	Tuesday, December 10 0945-1200